2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

level. There are also many village clerks and teachers who speak English to their children to help prepare them for school, for a sound command of English is a prerequisite to social advancement.

It is quite true that education has been given greater emphasis in the urban areas than in the villages; but the introduction of compulsory education between the ages of six and fourteen is rapidly closing this gap. The spread of education is reflected in the decline of illiteracy. In 1948, just two years after the introduction of compulsory education, 16 per cent of the population of Valletta and Sliema over fourteen years of age, and 47 per cent of the same age group in Gozo, were illiterate. By 1957, these figures had fallen to 9 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. During the same period, the national illiteracy rate declined from 37 per cent to 17 per cent.[1]

A number of other forces operate to reduce the social distance between town and country. The greater employment opportunities during and after the war, and the continuous improvement in public transport that allowed the villagers to take advantage of them, have placed an ever-increasing number of viliagers alongside townsmen at desks and work benches. The war itself was a major force in the same direction, for British troops and people from the urban areas were evacuated to the country to escape the bombing attacks, and so shared the life of their rural neighbours. All learned a good deal from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Maltese, especially in the villages, regard the last war as a social milestone, a dividing line between past dependence upon agriculture and present wage labour, between poverty and relative prosperity.

II

The inhabitants of the villages in Malta no longer derive their livelihood from agriculture, though this was the rule a century ago. Today most are semi-skilled and unskilled industrial labourers who work outside their villages for the Malta Government, the

[1] *Eleventh Census of the Maltese Islands, 1948* (Valletta, Progress Press), pp. 297 ff.; and *1957 Census of the Maltese Islands: Report on Population and Housing* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1958), pp. 41 ff. The two sets of figures are not quite comparable. Those for 1948 represent the total number of illiterates, while the 1957 figures show only the number of people who never attended school.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

793 quarrels and village disputes, for their position in society makes them important allies. These demands frequently place them in the difficult position of having to choose between acting as an impartial servant of God and acting as a good son and loyal friend, who can only be impartial at the cost of making enemies of friends and family.

793 While parish priests, in all save the smallest parishes, usually
465 receive an income sufficient for a reasonably comfortable life, few ordinary diocesan priests can live on their income as clerics. The average village priest gets only his daily Mass stipend of five shillings as compensation for his clerical services. If a priest is popular and gifted, he may be able to earn a bit extra by preaching, lecturing and taking part in religious functions in other parishes. Even so, most priests are forced to look to secular fields to be able to help support their parents and near relatives. Thus it is that most of the village clergy are part-time priests. That is, they spend most of the day away from their parish working at jobs that vary from farming to school teaching. Their pastoral work in their own parish is limited.

793 Of the eight priests born in Kortin and still living there, two are retired, one is the parish curate, two work outside the village as teachers and three are clerks with various diocesan bodies. In the evening most help the parish priest in church, teach catechism to the children and take charge of the various lay associations for which the parish priest has asked them to be responsible. In Farrug there is only one local priest in the village. He teaches in the village's elementary school, and assists the parish priest in the evening, on Sundays and on feast days.

794 In almost every village there is an infants' school run by one of the
[792] female religious orders. The nuns are supported by donations of cash
[465] and produce from the local inhabitants. A few nuns earn something by doing elementary nursing among the sick of the community.

● [872] There are a number of other officers connected with the parish. These include the procurators (administrators) of the smaller churches and chapels, the sacristan, the choirmaster, the organist, the prefect of the altar boys, and so on. All have certain responsi-
[793] bilities delegated to them by the parish priest. In those villages where the celebration of the annual festa is organized by a committee, its members have the authority to command the financial and manpower resources of the community while they prepare